

CHRIST CENTERED COMMUNITY (C3) HOMEWORK

“Edifying the body by embracing the grace of the Spirit to live out the love of the Son in fellowship that glorifies the Father”



LEADER TIPS:

Remember that the answers on the leader's guide are simply suggestions you can use. Don't feel like you need to express these answers word for word to your group. They are meant to help you.

Text in Blue – SAMPLE answers and information. Try to avoid just reading these answers. These are just to point you in the right direction and clarify the questions

Text in Green – Additional questions you CAN ask, but don't feel pressured to use them. And even better, think of some of your own questions to ask your group! (If you don't understand the question just ignore it)

Text in Red – Guidance to help you facilitate productive discussions with your group

WARM UP

What is the most expensive thing you've bought?

What is the most ridiculous thing you've ever spent money on?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What was one new thing you learned from Sunday's message?

2. In Matt 6:19-24, Jesus tells us that ultimately the way we treat money shows where our hearts are. In what way does the act of giving reveal our hearts?

Jesus says you cannot serve both God and riches. God indicates in His word that we should be giving back to Him. So, if we are unwilling to give it shows that we are loyal to money over God. Jesus also says that whatever you treasure will have the allegiance of your heart. If you treasure God, you will obey Him and be generous in giving.

3. It is clear from all the way back in the Garden of Eden and with Cain and Able that even the humans knew that part of stewardship is returning to God a portion of what He entrusts to us.

God makes some amazing statements about this ordinary principle (ordinance) in Malachi 3:6-12, rebuking the Israelites for disobeying it.

a) Why do you think God's statement about His character in verse 6 is important to the context of this passage? And to the context of giving?

All throughout history, Satan has tried to get people to question God's word and his faithfulness. In the garden, Satan's tactic was to get Adam and Even to question God's word, and when they did they ended up stealing from God. Many times, even today people assert that giving (and tithing) are not applicable to Christians now. However, God makes it perfectly clear before He even starts talking about giving that He does not change and so His timeless principles do not change. He is also saying that we can trust his faithful character to fulfill the promises (negative and positive) in this passage.

What is the does the name LORD (YAHWEH) imply? How does that provide context for giving to God?

YAHWEH implies that God is all-sufficient and needs nothing. God says His name at the start to indicate that giving to Him is not done because He needs anything. Giving is about testing our faith and our love of God. We don't fill a need that YAHWEH has. See Psalm 50:12-15.

b) When God says that He has been robbed, what does that imply about His ownership? If the tithe and offerings were robbed from God that implies that God owns them. You cannot steal something from someone who does not have ownership.

If God is all-powerful, how can He be robbed?

If God has the power to do anything and He says that He has been robbed then He must have permitted the robbery. He will let us steal what is His but He will also let us experience the consequences. We bring the curse on ourselves.

c) We talked about the reality that under the new covenant we are not required to tithe in the way that the Israelites were under the Mosaic law. But God talks about more than just the tithe in this passage. What other form of giving is mentioned in this passage? God talks about offerings as well as tithes

d) Read Exodus 25:2 which describes the first mention in the Bible of "offering" used here. How is the offering described in Exodus and why is that important for the Malachi 3 passage?

The offering is described as being from the heart. It is a free will offering to God not a lawful requirement. This is very important for the context of Malachi 3 because it means that God is extending these promises to the kind of free will offerings or "cheerful giving" that we are supposed to be doing under the new covenant. It means that the principles in this passage apply to Christian giving.

e) As we trust God and obey His ordinance of giving, what promises are given to us in this passage? What warnings are given?

God promises to bless abundantly, and to restrain Satan from devouring our resources. But he also warns that those who disobey bring themselves under a curse.

Where else in the Bible does God tell us to test Him on something?

Trick question: this is the only place in the Bible that God explicitly says to test or try Him on something. It indicates how important this is to God.

4. Read 2 Cor 9:6-11. Paul shows us the heart of a Christian giver.

a) Write down what he says this person does and does not give like.

Heart-felt or heart motivated, not reluctantly, not from compulsion or legalistically, full of gladness or cheer

How does verse 7a relate to Exodus 25:2? How do both of those verses give context to Malachi 3:8?

Both 2 Cor 9:7 and Exodus 25:2 describe giving that is heartfelt or heart motivated. These are willing acts of offering or returning to God. If the offering described in Malachi 3:8 is a reference to the heart-felt giving of Exodus 25:2 and 2 Cor 9:7 describes the same thing, then the promises and warnings of Mal 3:8 apply to 2 Cor 9:7 as well.

b) Paul tells us to give because God loves a cheerful giver. He says that is the reason to give. Why is that important? Why do you think God loves a cheerful giver?

God is most glorified in us when we are satisfied (joyful in relation to) in Him. (1) Giving cheerfully or joyfully indicates where our treasure is. If God is our treasure, we will happily obey him and be generous in giving. (2) Giving also shows that we recognize that

God owns it all anyway. (3) And if we view God as the best, we will imitate His character. He is Jehovah Jireh (the Great Generous Giver) and He gave the greatest gift through Jesus. We will seek to be generous in giving just like He is generous in giving. Ultimately, God is glorified when we obey, when we imitate Him, and when we acknowledge His ownership in thankful, faithful stewardship. When we do these things joyfully and with gladness, we display our heart satisfaction and treasuring of God above anything else.

c) What are some factors that keep you from giving cheerfully?

(This is an application question that really boils down to trust. What ways do you struggle to trust God and thus struggle to give joyfully?)

d) How does God's giving and our giving relate in this passage?

God gives to us so we can give. In other words, our giving is empowered by God's giving. We cannot serve God without God serving us first (Acts 17:25). God *makes grace abound* so that we can do good works. God supplies and multiplies so that we can bear increasing fruit. God enriches us so that we can give generously.

What evidence (promises) does Paul give us in this passage to root our faith and help it become active?

5. For your personal reflection, do you trust God to provide abundant grace for all of your needs? Does your giving reflect this trust?

(These are all very applicational and possibly sensitive questions. Be careful how you ask them to your group. Perhaps share your own story or practical methods of giving and see if anyone else wants to share as well. Or approach someone before the meeting to see if they would be comfortable sharing.)

a) Do you give regularly to the church or other ministries? Why not?

b) How can you start giving this week? And what practical methods can you use to do that?